

# The employability of youth in the European Union: priorities and institutional involvement Birca A. (Republic of Moldova)

## Трудоустройство молодежи в Европейском Союзе: приоритеты и институциональное вовлечение Быркэ А. П. (Республика Молдова)

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**Abstract:** this article talks about the employability of young people in the European Union. Thus, there are several theoretical approaches regarding the employability and the EU's concerns on this issue. An analysis is presented of the rate of employability of young people in the European Union countries, depending on the educational institution graduated and the period of time spent from graduation to the hiring to the first job.

**Аннотация:** эта статья говорит о занятости молодежи в Европейском Союзе. Таким образом, существует несколько теоретических подходов в отношении трудоустройства, а также озабоченность ЕС по этому вопросу. Был сделан анализ трудоустройства молодежи в странах Европейского Союза, в зависимости от учебного заведения и периода времени, проведенного от окончания учебы до первой занятости. Анализ проводился на основе статистической информации Европейского Союза.

**Keywords:** employability, the European Union, graduates, educational institutions.

**Ключевые слова:** трудоустройство, Европейский союз, молодежь, учебные заведения.

### Introduction

Youth employment has been and remains a priority issue for most governments in the world. Considering the difficulties faced by young people in the transition from school to the work environment, decision makers at national level have sought to develop and implement different policies and processes that facilitate this process. On the other hand, educational institutions have an important role in this process, expressed through the quality of education offered and by linking education programs to labor market demands. To meet the new requirements, imposed by employers, human resources must combine transversal skills and competencies, multidisciplinary and innovation skills, and have updated specialized knowledge to contribute to society and labor market needs. Joint efforts of the subjects involved in the process aim to increase employment of graduates of the educational institutions.

At the European Union level, the employability is one of the pillars to which European Commission gives the priority in the employment strategy of the workforce, advancing more obligations for the EU members. According to the European Employment Strategy, adopted in 1997, employability is one of the four basic principles, along with adaptability, social entrepreneurship and equal opportunities. Being concerned with this issue, the European Union is performing at certain time intervals researches on the employability rate of the young people.

### Literature review

The concept of employability exists in the literature for many years. Current interest towards this concept is determined by:

- evolving nature of public employment policy that put more emphasis on developing skills and professional skills to face economic competition;
- uncertainty among employers about the complexity of jobs they might have in the future [2, p. 112].

Currently, the term "employability" is given several interpretations. Overall, this study reflects their relevance to labor market. Employability is defined as a person's ability to get a job in accordance with his powers, to maintain it, to develop professionally, its ability to change jobs, and the entrepreneurship ability of a person.

Briefly, employability is the capability of a person to find a job immediately after graduation. Largely employability is the capability of the person to move into the labor market, the transition from one job to another in order to develop human potential and ensure a sustainable occupation.

According to researchers Ronald McQuaid and Colin Lindsay, employability is influenced not only by personal factors, but also by a number of external factors [9, p. 198]. However, Hartshorn C. and L. Sear argue that to enhance employability it is necessary to consider the skills required currently in the changing labor market, and skills required for the development of entrepreneurship [7, p. 21]. On the other hand, Fugate and assistants defined employability as a concept consisting of three dimensions: adaptability, identifying career, human and social capital [5, p. 15]. Another specialist - Little - argues that employability is a concept difficult to define - it is a

multidimensional concept that requires making a distinction between the relevant factors for getting a job and relevant factors that prepare the person to carry out a professional activity [10, p. 8].

Mostly, the definitions of the concept of employability focuses on the transition of graduates into the labor market after graduation. There are two main types of defining such concepts: the first centered on employment, while the second is focused on skills.

A definition of employability is used within the Education and Training 2020 strategy. According to this, employability is a combination of factors which enable individuals to advance in their careers, to stay or to enter successfully on the labor market. Similarly, under the Bologna process, term employability is understood as "the ability of graduates to get relevant initial jobs, or become self-employed, to keep their jobs done and to be able move successfully into the labor market.

An alternative approach (or complementary) is one that focuses on the skills and competences acquired by young people during vocational studies. According to Yorke, employability is a set of results - skills, competences and personal attributes - they offer a greater likelihood graduates to get jobs and succeed in the job chosen [11, p. 32]. Such skills and competences are usually understood as necessary for employers. In essence, the young presents employability if he can demonstrate a successful set of results and competences acquired, as relevant to the post of work. Thus, according to Yorke, employability is influenced by four interrelated elements (Figure 1).

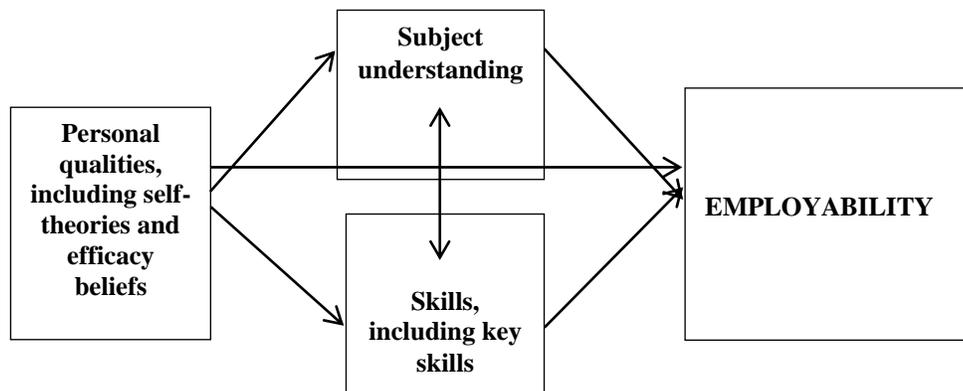


Fig. 1. A schematic model of employability

Source: [11; 76].

Employability centered on skills and competencies, provides a more concrete task for educational institutions. Besides providing teaching methods institutions must develop "general", "transferable" or "essential" skills of the students. However at which level educational institutions does this remains an open question. Educational institutions may decide to "incorporate" such skills within existing courses or to have a different approach and specific courses and curriculum development in order to develop general skills.

#### **Employability analysis of young people in European Union countries**

To analyze the level of employability of young people in EU countries were used official data of European Statistics (EUROSTAT). From time to time, Eurostat provides information on the employability level of the young people. The latest informations presented by EUROSTAT regarding youth employability refers to the 2009 financial year marked by global economic crisis. In order to achieve an exhaustive research, youth employability problem was analyzed according to the level of their studies. Thus, Figure 2 shows the employment rate of graduates of higher education institutions, which in the EU was 84.2%.

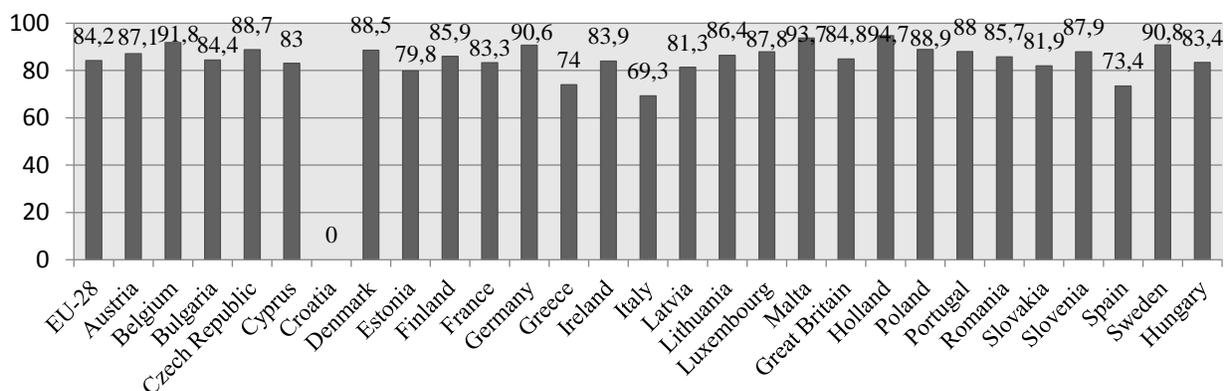


Fig. 2. The employment rate of graduates of higher education institutions, %

Source: Developed by author based on European Union statistics.

From Figure 2, we see that the employment rate of university graduates varies between 94.7% and 69.3%. Thus, the highest employment rate of graduates of higher education institutions was registered in the Netherlands, Malta, Belgium and Sweden. In contrast, the lowest employment rate of graduates of higher education institutions is positioned such countries as Italy, Spain, Greece and Estonia.

The second category of youth, which was analyzed employment rate refers to graduates of secondary specialized or colleagues (Figure 3).

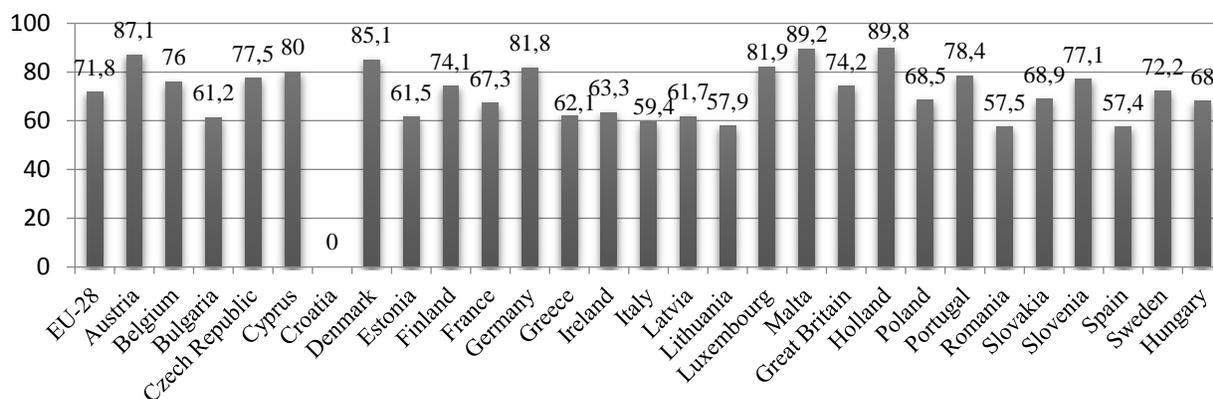


Fig. 3. The employment rate of graduates of specialized secondary institutions, %

Source: Developed by author based on European Union statistics.

According to Figure 3, the employment rate of graduates of specialized secondary institutions was 71.8% at EU level. However, there are large discrepancies regarding the employment rate of graduates of specialized secondary institutions in EU countries exceeding over 20%. While in some countries the employment rate for graduates of specialized secondary institutions exceeds 80% (Netherlands, Malta, Austria, Denmark, etc.), then in other countries this indicator is below 60% (Spain, Romania, Lithuania and Italy).

Another aspect of youth employability refers to the average time spent in employment after graduation until getting the first job. It varies by level of education obtained by each person. Table 1 presents information on the average time consumed to hiring graduates in their first job, in 2009.

As shown in Table 1, the fastest engage in work are graduates with higher education. This may be due to greater employment opportunities compared to other categories of graduates. Thus, the average time spent by graduates of higher education ranged from 2.6 months in Malta to 12.2 months in Greece. For graduates of secondary specialized institutions, the average length of employment ranged from 3.2 months in the UK, up to 13.9 months in Greece and Cyprus. Relatively long period of time after graduation to get employed at the first job in countries like Greece and Italy are due to the global economic crisis that affected a greater extent these countries.

Table 1. The average time spent from graduation to employment in various categories of graduates (months)

No.	Countries	2009
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		<b>Graduates of higher education institutions</b>	<b>Graduates of the vocational training and college</b>	<b>All categories of graduates</b>
1.	<b>EU-28</b>	<b>5,1</b>	<b>7,3</b>	<b>6,5</b>
2.	Austria	3,7	4,9	4,9
3.	Belgium	5,3	5,5	8,9
4.	Bulgaria	4,1	11,7	8,4
5.	Czech Republic	3,1	4,6	4,0
6.	Cyprus	4,8	13,9	8,1
7.	Croatia	;	;	;
8.	Denmark	3,7	3,7	4,6
9.	Estonia	2,8	4,8	4,3
10.	Finland	3,5	6,5	5,4
11.	France	4,6	6,6	5,8
12.	Germany	;	;	;
13.	Greece	12,2	13,9	13,1
14.	Ireland	3,9	4,7	4,3
15.	Italy	9,8	10,4	10,5
16.	Latvia	3,7	6,6	5,7
17.	Lithuania	3,0	5,1	4,2
18.	Luxembourg	4,2	5,7	5,1
19.	Malta	2,6	7,0	5,5
20.	Great Britain	3,0	3,2	3,5
21.	Holland	3,0	3,3	3,5
22.	Poland	3,6	9,0	6,2
23.	Portugal	4,7	5,7	5,7
24.	Romania	7,3	12,0	10,0
25.	Slovakia	3,5	6,3	5,6
26.	Slovenia	4,6	9,8	7,6
27.	Spain	7,0	8,8	8,2
28.	Sweden	3,5	5,0	4,4
29.	Hungary	4,0	6,4	5,6

**Source:** Developed by author based on European Union statistics.

Regarding Moldova, there is no single methodology to be applied globally to determine the rate of employment of graduates of educational institutions. Each institution, in particular higher education institutions conduct their own investigations to determine the employability rate of their graduates. Or, employability rate is an important indicator that promotes higher education institutions in the process of attracting new candidates to study. In the case of Moldova, the rate of employability is influenced by the high level of labor migration. However, in recent years, there is an increase in the number of migrants with higher education [1; p. 26].

### **Conclusion**

Employability of young people is an important issue enough for each country it can be both economic and social. The economical character of employability of young people is related to the fact that the duration of unemployment, the state pays doles. And, the higher is the period from graduation to first employment the country's economic effort is bigger. The social character is that the lack of job opportunities in their country, determine young people to migrate abroad.

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